

Traffic robbery ring is broken, police believe...

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A fourth man was arrested yesterday, and police now say they think they have broken a ring responsible for more than 20 "red light" robberies of women driving to work in West Oakland.

The robberies, in which women waiting at traffic signals in the area of Seventh and Market streets had their car windows shattered and their purses taken, began in late August.

After the pattern was established by the department's crime analysis section, an arm of Chief of Police George Hart's office, members of the Special Duty Unit flooded the area in plain clothes.

On Oct. 18, Arnold Coley, 24, was arrested after undercover officers saw him commit one of the robberies, Lt. Ray Birge said yesterday.

Two other men, Robert Menefee, 25, and Claiborne Livingston, 20, were arrested Tuesday. The fourth suspect, Terry Gordon, was arrested yesterday.

Birge said that besides smashing car windows with rocks, the men also would use a ruse of asking the drivers for directions; when the drivers rolled down their windows, the thieves would grab their purses.

The spree caused one Harbor Road shipping line, where a number of the victims worked, to recommend that its employees carry tear gas and travel in groups.